



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Appreciating America's Most Valuable Privilege – Jury Service**

SAN BERNARDINO, CA – May 9, 2002 One million San Bernardino County residents will be randomly selected to share something in common this year. No, it isn't the State Lotto, but it is the opportunity to contribute to one of our most valuable American rights and privileges – jury service. From May 13 – 17 The Superior Court of California, County of San Bernardino will join courts across the state to celebrate Juror Appreciation Week to honor those Californians who participate in jury service. In addition, The San Bernardino County Superior Court is taking this opportunity to recognize employers and business owners who have paid their employees for jury service or have personally participated in the jury-trial process.

The week was established by a special resolution passed by the California Legislature in 1998 that recognizes the important contribution of jurors in “making the cherished right of trial by jury a reality,” and to impress upon the general public the critical role the jury system plays in our democracy as well as the importance of citizen participation in jury service.

Identified as the corner stone of democracy, our jury system is only viable when supported by its citizens and the business community it serves. Businesses, as well as individuals, often use the justice system and may find themselves in a lawsuit as plaintiff or defendant. The system depends on the availability of all eligible persons, including those employed by our local businesses, to participate in the process unless that participation will result in an extreme financial hardship to the employee.

This year, in observance of Jury Appreciation Week, jurors in all San Bernardino County courthouses are being treated to free coffee and cookies, banners, pens, and bookmarks. A new video on jury service “Ideals Made Real” will be premiered, highlighting the importance of the juror to the American justice system and answering many frequently asked questions about jury service. The video, California's first official jury orientation video, provides a thoughtful overview of the juror experience, featuring interviews with former jurors and an introduction to the one-day/one-trial system.

Juror Appreciation by the San Bernardino County Superior Court is not restricted to May 13 – 17. The Court has made significant and permanent developments that improve jury service. In May 2002 the San Bernardino Superior Court implemented the Jury Interactive Voice Response Telephone System (IVR) that retrieves jury information and instructions in less than 30 seconds, decreasing time from the four to five minutes it has previously taken to get the needed information.

Using the IVR, callers can immediately access information concerning their assigned jury group by inputting their Jury ID number, which is identified on their jury summons notification. Previously, the caller had to listen to information on all jury groups in order to find out if their group was scheduled for court attendance.

In addition to information on jury groups, residents may request work verification forms, which can be faxed or mailed, find out general information about jury service and directions to the courts, learn the status of jury pay and can get postponements for jury service. Information on excusals from jury service is available, but excusal requests must still be submitted in writing. Court information is provided in both English and Spanish and is available for all court districts. San Bernardino residents call 884-1858. All other county residents call 1-800-402-5879.

In May 2000 Juror Appreciation Week was distinguished by the opening of a new parking lot with more than 200 spaces for jury parking. Previously, jurors had to compete with county and court employees and customers for parking spaces near the courthouse. The lot, located on Second Street just east of Arrowhead opens at 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. with a guard on service to assist with morning traffic.

In addition to the improvements implemented by the San Bernardino County Superior Court, there have been several statewide improvements to the jury system accomplished by the California Judicial Council, the constitutionally mandated body responsible for improving the administration of justice in California. Chief Justice Ronald M. George, Chair of the Judicial Council, has urged legislators to make changes to dramatically improve the juror experience and to encourage citizen participation on juries. Specific accomplishments include increased juror compensation that was increased in July 2000 from \$5.00 to \$15.00 per day starting on the second day of service. This was the first increase in 43 years and represents the first step toward the council's goal of \$40.00 per day.

In May 1999 the Judicial Council adopted rule 861 to create a one-day/one-trial jury system throughout the state. Under this system, a juror need only appear for one day unless he or she is selected for a trial. If not chosen for a trial or assigned to jury selection on the first day of service, the juror will have satisfied his or her obligation for at least one year.

For more information on jury service in San Bernardino County please visit the San Bernardino County Courts web site at <http://www.sbcounty.gov/courts/> and choose the link "Jury Information." For additional information on the state jury service rules and standards please consult the jury-service resource guide located on the California Courts Web at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jury/](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jury/).

